

The Builder.

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MAN is said to be a "social animal," writes Addison, "and as an instance of it we may observe; that we take all occasions and pretences of forming ourselves into those little nocturnal assemblies which are commonly known by the name of CLUBS. When a set of men find themselves agree in any particular, though never so trivial, they establish themselves into a kind of fraternity, and meet once or twice a week upon the account of such a fantastic resemblance." These clubs were very different from those of the present day, the rise of which is quite recent. They were mostly of a humble character, and moderate in their terms of membership, though leading to expenses and bad habits. In the Essex-street Club, founded by Dr. Johnson, it was stipulated that each member should spend not less than sixpence; that each absentee should forfeit threepence; and every person present give a penny to the waiter! The ordinary clubs of this kind were apparently very stupid, and promoted drinking and revelry rather than wit or intellectual conversation. Steel, in "The Tatler," gives an account of a prosy one, and moralizes at the close, in his manner, on the worthless conversation of some of the old men composing it. "The only way of avoiding such a trifling and frivolous old age," says he (and the advice is not out of date), "is to lay up in our way to it such stores of knowledge and observation as may make us useful and agreeable in our declining years. The mind of man in a long life will become a magazine of wisdom or folly, and will consequently discharge itself in something impertinent or improving. For which reason, as there is nothing more ridiculous than an old terrifying story-teller, so there is nothing more venerable than one who has turned his experience to the entertainment and advantage of mankind."

The Beef-steak Club was founded in the reign of Queen Anne:—

"He that of honour, wit, and mirth partakes,
May be a fit companion o'er beef-steaks."

The Beef-steak Society, a different association, was commenced in 1735, and in apartments of their own, at the Lyceum Theatre, the members still enjoy beef and conviviality one day in the week during the season.

The "Literary Club," founded by Reynolds and Johnson, in 1763, and which is still maintained, must be known by all readers. It met at first at the "Turk's Head," in Gerrard-street, Soho, and, besides the founders, included Goldsmith, Burke, Garrick, Boswell, Beauclerc, and Sir John Hawkins.

The "Wednesday Club," at the Globe Tavern, in Fleet-street, was another of those to which Goldsmith belonged. The position of the parties forming such clubs may be gathered from Derrick's anecdote of Goldsmith's introduction to the "Robin Hood Club." Goldy was struck by the important appearance of the chairman in his gilt chair, and said, "This must be the Lord Chancellor at least." "No,"

said Derrick, "He's only master of the rolls." He was a baker.

A few years ago we made the circuit of the London taverns, and were surprised to find how many merely convivial clubs (thought by some to have been "put down" by the popular Literary Institutions of the day) then existed, and indeed still exist.

Of the "chocolate houses" and coffee-houses, which took an associative character, White's, of St. James's-street, was, perhaps, the earliest. As White's Chocolate House, on the site of what is now "Arthur's Club House," it was established between 1690 and 1700; and as White's Club House, 38, St. James's-street, opposite to what used to be "Crockford's," it is known at this day. White's, Boodle's, the Grecian, the Cocoa Tree, are all historical: each of them symbolised certain opinions or habits. As Defoe writes (1722), "A Whig will no more go to the Cocoa Tree or Osinda's than a Tory will be seen at the coffee-house of St. James's." The character which formerly attached to those who belonged to White's was that of men of pleasure and desperate gamblers. The Earl of Oxford cursed it as "the bane of half the English nobility;" and a story is mentioned by Walpole to the effect that a man dropping down dead at the door of the club, bets were made by the members whether he was dead or not, and they would not permit his being bled because it would affect the fairness of the bet.* The first house was burnt 1773, when it was kept by a Mr. Arthur. There is a book containing the "Rules of the old Club at White's," dated 1736, with a list of the members which includes the names of many leading men. The original front of the building now occupied by the club, and where it has been since 1755, was designed by James Wyatt. From time to time the house underwent various alterations and additions; and several architects have been employed to carry these into effect: among those of later date were Mr. Higgins, the late Mr. Goldcut, and the late Mr. Papworth. In the autumn of 1850, certain improvements being thought necessary, it came to be considered that the front was of too plain a character, when contrasted with the many elegant buildings which had risen up around it. Mr. Lockyer was consulted by Mr. Raggett as to the possibility of improving the façade; and under his direction it has been made to take the appearance represented by our engraving.†

The four bas-reliefs, representing the four seasons, which occupy the place of four sashes, were designed by Mr. George Scharf, jun. The works were executed in a very short space of time by Messrs. W. Cubitt and Co. and the interior was redecorated by Mr. Morant.

The club, which is at this time limited to 500 members, was formerly composed of the high Tory party, but though Conservative principles may probably prevail, it has now ceased to be a political club, and may rather be termed "Aristocratic." Several of the present members have belonged to the club upwards of half a century, and the ancestors of most of the noblemen and men of fashion of the present day who belong to the club were formerly members of it. It may be gathered, from what we

* Quoted in "The Handbook for London," where there is an account of the club; but rather, as Mr. Raggett, the present proprietor, informs us, of what it was then what it now is.
† See p. 240.

have said, that the management of the club is quite different from that of others of recent date, Mr. Raggett being individually the proprietor. The freehold was purchased by his late father in 1812.

Of some of the other London clubs, and of the expediency of extending their advantages, we shall find another opportunity to speak. The simple fact that from a published account of 17,323 dinners at the "Athenæum," the average cost was 2s. 9½d. each, and that the average quantity of wine for each person was a small fraction more than half a pint, speaks volumes.

THE LATE MR. THOMAS ALLASON, ARCHITECT.

WE record, with regret, the death of an accomplished architect, and an esteemed friend, Mr. Thomas Allason, which took place on Friday, the 9th, after a few hours' illness, in the 62nd year of his age. The lives of artists and architects are best written in their works, but a few biographical incidents may always be gleaned from those who have gained eminence and success in their profession, which may serve as guides, and encourage emulation in others who are embarking on a similar voyage of life. Mr. Allason earned his prosperity by an untiring devotedness to his professional duties: he was strictly "*faber fortuna sue*," and accumulated during a practice of nearly forty years a handsome independence. Brought up in the office of Mr. Atkinson, an architect of some celebrity, he distinguished himself at a very early period by the neatness and elegance of his drawings, and obtained the gold and silver medals from the Royal Academy. At that time "Stuart's Athens," and "The Antiquities of Attica," were the class-books of an architect's office, while the works of Soane, Wilkins, and Smirke gave the tone of architectural design to the student. Mr. Allason carefully studied Greek architecture, and appreciated its beauty. All his own designs are strongly impressed with the delicacy of feeling and carefulness of finish which such studies inevitably produce upon an educated mind.

His taste for Greek architecture was still further confirmed by a tour which he brought on the continent and through Greece, as draughtsman to Messrs. John and Edward Stanhope, whom he assisted in their examination and publications on the remains at Olympia and Plataea. On his return from this tour, he published in folio a work on the antiquities of Pola, and a clever etching of Milan Cathedral.

Established in London in the year 1817, he was extensively engaged as an assistant architect, and his pencil supplied numerous designs, not only for buildings, but also for furniture decorations and landscape gardening. In this latter branch he was very successful, and was retained for some years by the late Earl of Shrewsbury, in laying out the gardens at Alton Towers and in designing additions to the mansion.

When the members of the Stock Exchange founded the Alliance Fire Assurance Company, Mr. Allason (having obtained experience as an assistant in a similar office) was appointed their surveyor. This introduction to the moneyed interest of London gave him many opportunities of developing his talents. The Rothschilds, the Montefiores, and Ricardos, were his clients, and brought him also a valuable city and private connection. He erected many villas and mansions. The Alliance Fire Office, in Bartholomew-lane, is perhaps his chief architectural public edifice; but it is only necessary to refer to the other appointments which he held, such as surveyor to the Stock Exchange, the Pollen estate in London, the D'Esterre estate at Ramsgate, &c. to appreciate the labour of his life. Unlike many of the profession, who have the credit of designs which their pencil could not delineate, Mr. Allason worked out all his buildings by his own hand, from the rough plan down to the minutest detail of a working drawing. He never had but one pupil, and but one clerk. He began life dependant on